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THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS LOOKS AT SCHOOL DECENTRALIZATION--A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BUNDY REPORT WITH UFT PROPOSALS.

UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, NEW YORK, N.Y.

PUB DATE DEC 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.64 14P.

DESCRIPTORS- *DECENTRALIZATION, *COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, *BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICY, *EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION, *PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS, EDUCATIONAL FINANCE, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, SCHOOL INTEGRATION, PERSONNEL POLICY, PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL, RECRUITMENT, TEACHER PLACEMENT, EVALUATION, CURRICULUM, SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS, UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, MAYOR'S PANEL ON DECENTRALIZATION, NEW YORK CITY, BUNDY REPORT

ALTHOUGH THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS FEELS THAT THE NEW YORK CITY'S PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IS NECESSARY, IT MAINTAINS THAT THE SPECIFIC CHANGES RECOMMENDED BY THE BUNDY REPORT FOR SCHOOL DECENTRALIZATION ARE NOT CONDUCIVE TO EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT. THE FEDERATION FEELS THAT INSTEAD OF DIVIDING THE SCHOOLS INTO 30-60 DISCRETE SCHOOL DISTRICTS, WHICH MAY VASTLY INCREASE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS AND REINFORCE EXISTING PATTERNS OF SEGREGATION, THE SCHOOL SYSTEM MIGHT BEST BE DECENTRALIZED INTO NO MORE THAN 15 SEPARATE DISTRICTS. THE PRESENT BOARD OF EDUCATION WOULD HAVE TO BE REMOVED AND THE MAYOR MIGHT THEN SELECT A NONSALARIED CENTRAL BOARD FROM PERSONS INITIALLY ELECTED BY LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS. THESE LOCAL BOARDS SHOULD BE ABLE TO ELECT THEIR OWN DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS. HOWEVER, THE HIRING AND DISMISSAL OF TEACHERS AND SUPERVISORS, DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUMS, AND SELECTION OF TEXTBOOKS SHOULD NOT BE LEFT IN THE UNPROFESSIONAL HANDS OF LAY PERSONS. AND, IF EACH DISTRICT IS ALLOWED TO RECRUIT ITS OWN STAFF, TEACHERS WILL GRAVITATE TO THE MOST DESIRABLE, LEAST DISADVANTAGED, DISTRICTS. UNDER THE BUNDY PLAN LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS WOULD HAVE TO COMPETE FOR A SHARE OF THE CENTRAL BUDGET. THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM OF INSUFFICIENT FUNDS MIGHT BE MET BY DOUBLING PRESENT PER PUPIL EXPENDITURES AND BY GUARANTEEING A FIXED PERCENTAGE OF FUNDS TO THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARDS. THE BUNDY REPORT'S RECOMMENDATION WOULD ALSO HAVE TEACHERS AND LOCALITIES COMPETE FOR THE REMAINS OF CENTRAL MONIES. TEACHER-COMMUNITY HOSTILITIES WOULD FURTHER INCREASE IF, AS SUGGESTED IN THE REPORT, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WERE CONDUCTED ON A LOCAL RATHER THAN CITYWIDE BASIS. FINALLY, REVISIONS SHOULD BE MADE IN THE PRESENT AND RECOMMENDED SYSTEMS OF TEACHER LICENSING AND RECRUITMENT. THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, AFL-CIO, 260 PARK AVENUE, SOUTH, NEW YORK, NEW YORK, 10010. (LB)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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A Critical Analysis of the Bundy Report with UFT Proposals

UD 005382

ED016021

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The policy positions embodied in this booklet were adopted by the Executive Board on November 28, 1967. The complete text was approved by overwhelming vote of the Delegate Assembly of the United Federation of Teachers on December 20, 1967. It is the result of recommendations of the AdHoc Committee on Decentralization, chaired by Sanford Gelernter. The members of the committee were William Cirone, Ponsie Hillman, Ann Kessler, Fred Koury and Gerald Walts.

I
INTRODUCTION

Basic Changes Needed

The recent report of the Mayor's Panel on Decentralization entitled "Reconnection for Learning" constitutes a call for far-reaching, fundamental changes in our school system. There can be no questioning the need for major changes. The United Federation of Teachers has attempted for many years to arouse public awareness on school problems. We have pointed to high teacher turnover, oversized classes, ineffective teacher recruitment, a lack of textbooks and materials, 40% of the teaching staff not regularly licensed, need for on-the-job training, low achievement rates by pupils in many areas of the city and the failure of the schools to provide adequate clinical services. *Any discussion of the Bundy panel's proposals must begin with an acknowledgement of the great failures of the present system and the need for change.* Whatever differences we may have with the recommendations made will be based not on the need for change but on the question of whether the specific changes recommended will indeed produce educational improvements.

Decentralization

The question of whether our school system should be decentralized no longer seems to be an open question. The legislature, the Mayor, the Board of Education, parent and civic groups have all spoken out in favor of school decentralization. Obviously, in a system as large as ours, many decisions cannot and should not be made at *central* headquarters. The needs of local communities *and of the central* system itself are best served when real decision-making power is properly distributed. However, having said this much, many basic questions still remain. How many sub-units should there be? Which powers shall be delegated? How shall educational standards be improved? How can academic freedom and professional integrity be preserved while allowing for increased community participation? With questions such as these in mind, we turn to some of the basic problems which we find in the Bundy Report.

II
BUNDY REPORT: A CRITIQUE

Licensing of Teachers

The Bundy Report correctly criticizes the cumbersome, bureaucratic licensing procedures of the Board of Examiners. UFT has criticized them for many years. Basic school improvements depend upon an adequate supply of teachers and any system which reduces the number of qualified teachers is harmful. The UFT has long advocated the idea that New York City recruit on a nationwide basis. A city which employs more teachers than the eleven smallest states in the union combined cannot afford to recruit only those who are willing to travel to New York to take a test.

But the Bundy report recommends an equally poor procedure, namely, that every teacher with a state certification be eligible for employment in New York City. Since college standards vary greatly, the adoption of the Bundy proposal would eliminate any element of quality control. *The present system of licensing must be changed, but it should not be changed by abandoning educational standards altogether.*

Teacher Placement

At present, teachers are assigned by the central Board of Education to schools where they are needed. Teachers who fail to accept their assignments frequently lose their licenses, or are compelled to teach as per diem substitutes involving a loss of many financial benefits. Under the Bundy proposal, since local districts would hire their own teachers, teachers would be free to apply to the districts of their choice. There can be no question that teachers would apply to the most favored districts first and that the districts most in need would be compelled to hire only the rejects of other districts, if indeed, they were fortunate enough to receive any applications at all.

The argument that teachers will teach wherever there is good educational supervision and leadership begs the question because districts will not only be competing for teachers but also for supervisors. Favored districts will have their pick of supervisors, difficult districts will get the leftovers.

The UFT in its negotiations has limited transfers of teachers in order to assure an equitable distribution of regularly licensed teachers in *all* schools. *Since our responsibility is to educate all children, teacher assignment cannot be left to the brutal competition of the free market* where those who are already well off would inevitably profit at the expense of those who are now deprived.

While it is clear that the educational consequences of this proposal would be catastrophic, the social consequences cannot be ignored. The Bundy proposal makes it much more likely that teachers will be hired and fired not on the basis of educational competence, but on the basis of race, political conformity to parochial community prejudices and favoritism. New modern procedures both for licensing and equitable staff distribution are sorely needed, but any such procedures must guarantee the appointment of teachers (and supervisors) without racial discrimination, favoritism or politics.

Promotion

UFT has long been critical of our hierarchial system of supervision and administration. It is also well known that success in taking examinations bears little relationship to skills needed in supervision. But the recommendation of the Bundy Report that community school boards hire supervisors is a proven failure. This is precisely the method used in many school districts across the country which reward submissiveness and conformity. UFT is strongly opposed to the introduction of this system in New York.

Tenure

Tenure is a precious teacher right. Tenure gives teachers the security they need to teach honestly, free from community pressures. Under the tenure concept, a teacher can be dismissed only for cause after a hearing on the basis of charges brought against him *by other professionals who are competent to evaluate professional performance*. Under the *Bundy Report, charges could be brought against a tenured faculty member by a community board of laymen with no professional expertise*. This proposal is anti-professional. It would encourage local vigilantes to constantly harass teachers. No teacher with professional integrity could teach in such a district. UFT urges that this proposal be rejected.

Collective Bargaining

The Bundy Report gives local community boards the right to hire, fire, assign, develop educational programs and, in general, to manage all educational affairs within the district. Yet, the UFT is limited to collective bargaining only on a city-wide basis. This would effectively prevent teachers from having a voice in matters vital to them.

UFT would not permit this to happen. The inevitable result of the school reorganization on the basis proposed would be city-wide bargaining on salary and welfare issues and district-by-district bargaining on local issues. Our situation would become one which, after salary issues are settled, individual districts remain on strike over local issues. Under the Bundy Plan, collective bargaining would become a chaotic mess.

Finally, the Bundy Plan inevitably pits teacher against the community since local districts will receive only those funds which the Central Agency withholds from contract negotiations. Increased hostility against teachers becomes inevitable.

School Finance

Under the Bundy Report, individual school districts would compete with each other for a share of the educational budget in much the same way that local municipalities now compete for state aid. History has repeatedly shown that in such competition need is rarely the determining factor. Political influence and power is the major control usually leading to inequitable distribution.

But there is another major danger in the Bundy Report. Under the present system, school boards fight for increased funds. It has always been the view of the UFT that the Board has not asked for enough, but it has asked for budget on the basis of educational needs. Under the Bundy Plan the Board would, by legislation, be prevented from making requests on the basis of what would be good for the schools or the children. Instead, budgets would be based "on an estimate by the Central Education Agency of the amount likely to be available in the ensuing fiscal year . . ." Thus, the Board becomes not the ally of the children, parents and teachers fighting for better schools, but the agent of the Mayor in attempting to keep taxes low and the budget down.

Community Responsibility

The basic theory behind the report is that parents with a local community want what is good for their children and, if given effective power, will make educational changes to improve the schools. But the structure of the local school boards is such that the Mayor appoints *five* out of the *eleven members*. This would obviously give not parents or the community, but the Mayor effective control of the local boards. Furthermore, it would divide responsibility in that it would tend toward the community members blaming the Mayor's appointees and vice versa . . . just as the Mayor and the Governor frequently throw political footballs back and forth.

Integration

We know that total integration is not possible in New York City *now*. But this is not to say that *some* integration cannot be achieved and that significant progress cannot be made. It can. The recently published Coleman Report and Civil Rights Commission Report show that what children learn from each other and their social interaction in the classroom setting is a more important variable in the achievement of academic success than textbooks (or teachers). Integration, therefore, is not only vital as a social ideal but is an *educational* necessity.

Thomas Pettigrew, Harvard social psychologist and a co-author of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission study on school integration, says decentralization "could work to cement in and institutionalize segregation for the next several generations."

In view of this, we must oppose proposals in the Bundy Report which would further strengthen school boundaries on racially segregated lines.

Administrative Costs

Children are taught in classrooms. The direct educational process takes place in the classroom – with children and teachers. The priority for the expenditure of educational funds must be for classroom improvements and not for the building of more and more bureaucracy outside the classroom. New York City is already spending millions on out-of-classroom purposes, but the creation of up to 60 districts would skyrocket administrative expenditures. Our estimate is that an *additional* $200 million to $300 million would be needed to staff local school boards at the same level that other school districts of comparable size are staffed. This would be hundreds of millions taken away from the frontlines of the educational battles – diverted to offices in the rear. We must not use educational funds for purely administrative purposes.

Curriculum and Textbooks

The Bundy Report is replete with discussion of local and community control of curriculum and textbooks. As teachers we must warn of the dangers involved. Communities do have the right to decide whether they want their children to learn French or driver education. Whether they want Swahili or Hebrew. But once the community has decided what it wants, the teachers must be free to construct a curriculum, select the methods and determine the texts and other materials most suited. This is the very meaning of professionalism . . . the professional has the power to make decisions in those fields in which he is an expert. The public may decide that it wants good health, but the doctor controls the medicines and operations.

One additional issue emerges on matters of curriculum. The history of local community participation in American cities has been a sad one. Local activity has almost always involved parochialism and frequently bigotry. We all remember fights about textbooks which mentioned the United Nations and whether teachers should teach controversial subjects. Local educational fights usually center on opposition to new and innovative methods, community pressure to get rid of "frills" and to go back to the "good old days." Innovation and educational progress in curriculum have not come from local control – quite the opposite, they emerged from state and federal control overriding local provincialism.

Local Boards

American education is built on the concept of *lay* boards of education. Laymen employ professionals to administer and teach. The Bundy proposal may change this by paying local board members lost wages and expenses. Boards could easily become "full-time" and "professional". The language of the proposed legislation opens the way to a community pork-barrel.

Summary

The United Federation of Teachers believes that the adoption of the Bundy proposals would irreparably harm the educational system. The Bundy model is based upon a glorification of the old-time rural school structure and is unfit for the greatest urban center in the world. The Bundy model is not decentralization; it is Balkanization. It runs counter to the current trend of enlarging school districts in order to provide both for greater efficiency and integration by narrowing school boundaries to increase administrative costs and reinforce segregation. Finally, the Bundy report ignores the new power and integrity of the professional teacher who will not continue to teach in any school or district where professional decisions are made by laymen.

III
UFT PROPOSALS

The Bundy Report is not the answer, but change is needed. Public confidence in the present system is at an all time low, and without public confidence the necessary levels of school support will not be forthcoming. The United Federation of Teachers urges the following:

Central Board of Education

The present Board of Education should be removed immediately by the Legislature and a caretaker Board appointed. This is not an attack on the present Board or its individual members. They have tried hard. It may be that they have done as well as anyone could during these trying years. But we must recognize that they have lost public confidence and their continuation in office merely provokes increasing community hostility.

Decentralization

The New York City school system should be decentralized. The number of local school districts formed should be under 15 in order to insure the possibility of integration within each district and to reduce administrative costs. (1)

Local School Boards

Each local school district should have a local school board of 11 members. All should be elected by parents in the community and should serve without pay. Limitations should be placed upon expenses and reimbursement for lost salary. At least 6 members of the local school board shall be parents of children in the school. (2)

District Superintendent

District Superintendents who meet state qualifications shall be employed by local school boards on contract for a specified term of office.

Funding

The Central Board of Education shall continue to control those parts of the budget which represent its legal and contractual obligations. Since salaries, pension costs, social security taxes and other costs are central obligations, no service

is performed by requiring local districts to act as a mere transmission belt. Funds distributed to local boards should be for their own use – administrative and educational.

Local Boards should be *guaranteed* funds instead of merely getting whatever remains of central funds. Thus, a fixed percentage of all new funds must be earmarked for local distribution. This proposal would make teachers and community allies rather than competitors. Under the Bundy proposal, the more money teachers receive, the less for localities. Under this proposal the greater the budget increase, the greater the sum for districts and for teachers. Whereas the Bundy Report mandates a budget based on the funds likely to be available, the Board of Education shall develop its budget request on the basis of educational needs, not the availability of funds.

New Central Board

The new Central Board shall be appointed by the Mayor. For each vacancy, the Mayor shall select from three names, these to be elected by all members of the local school boards. The board shall be unsalaried. (3)

Teacher Licensing and Appointment

New York City should engage in a vigorous nationwide recruiting campaign. A national teacher examination and an interview by the Bureau of Personnel should be used, with a minimum exam mark established. Appointments should be made to districts from a ranked list by the central board, on the basis of vacancies. Final tenure of a teacher should depend upon successful completion of an on-the-job internship. Thus, although the Board of Examiners would be eliminated, the merit system would be maintained.

Promotion

We oppose the continuation of the hierarchical military model of supervision. We urge a two track system: administrators employed from non-teacher ranks on the basis of administrative competence and supervisors elected for a term of office by tenured members of their faculties.

Collective Bargaining

All collective bargaining shall be city-wide. Present tenure provisions shall continue.

Professionalism

Any new law must clearly recognize the right of the teacher to make educational decisions within his area of competence.

Teacher Transfer

A permanent staff is an essential ingredient for effective schools and the transfer plan established in the contract advances this goal. Thus, the transfer policy shall remain a contractual matter.

Innovations for Better Schools

The UFT endorses the following innovations:

(a) A two track system for administration and education.

(b) Increased assignments of paraprofessionals in the schools with a procedure to aid their training so that they would be encouraged to become teachers.

(c) The coordination of community efforts for the education of children – thus museums, hospitals, recreation centers, etc. would be utilized.

(d) The liaison arrangements between the Community Board and the UFT district chairman.

(e) The arrangements that might be made to educate some children for a portion of their school day in the homes of parents in the community.

IV
RECONNECTION FOR LEARNING

The Bundy Report concentrates on the organization of our school system, not on the content. We have indicated our differences and offered proposals of our own for structural changes. *But the basic shortcomings of our school system are not due to the fact that there are three districts or thirty, but to decades of financial starvation.* Insofar as the Bundy report has stressed mere changes in formal structure, it obscures the real problems. What happens to a child in the classroom is what counts. Quality depends upon whether that child gets help when he needs it – not on whether we have one school system or many. *To turn over a starved school system to local control is merely a political tactic to shift blame for inevitable failure on a powerless local leadership from responsible city and state officials.*

The Bundy Report puts the issue of decentralization in perspective when it says:

> "Reorganization will not give New York the additional funds it needs to improve schools in all parts of the city. It will not wipe out the generations of deprivation with which hundreds of thousands of children enter the schools. It will not meet the great deficits in health and welfare services that beset many families. It will certainly not wipe out the poverty and physical squalor to which too many children return when they leave school every afternoon. It will not wipe out the shortage of qualified, imaginative, and sensitive teachers and supervisors. It will not automatically provide insights into the uncharted terrain of the basic mechanisms of learning and teaching."

Along with legislation on *form,* therefore, we call upon the Mayor to propose and the Legislature to make possible the following substantial changes in the New York City school system:

1. *A doubling of the per pupil expenditure for New York City* to provide for the quality education which those who can afford it now pay for privately. Individualized instruction is the basic answer to massive educational retardation.

2. *Universally required early childhood education on a full time basis* from age 3. Much recent research indicates that by the time a child enters school it is already too late.

3. *Massive funds for a teacher internship program.* New teachers

should teach only half time and under the complete supervision of a fully qualified teacher. No teacher should be in total charge of a class until fully trained and judged competent.

4. *Funds for special facilities for children with special problems* – emotional, mental or physical.

Without these changes affecting the day-to-day education of children, any proposed structural change becomes an exercise in futility. The children of this city deserve more than just another empty gesture.

Turn page for footnote references.

(1) The moneys that would be spent on administrative costs (which the Panel believes may run as high as an additional $100 million per year) would be spent for sound educational programs for the children.

We endorse the Bundy Panel's criteria for distribution of funds as specified in their Model #2, P.56 of their report:

- **"It (funds) must be spent on the children or the schools, which are the loci of the problem"**
- **"It (funds) must be spent to improve achievement"**
- **"The district must be held accountable, explaining how the funds were spent to improve achievement or if achievement was negligible, the reasons why."**

(2) Local School Board Powers –

In addition to contracting the district superintendent and nominating candidates to the central school board and controlling their own funds, local school boards shall:

(a) Have the authority to establish contracts with other individuals or agencies. Thus the local school board might have a university team to evaluate a program or to act as a consultant.

(b) Have authority to obtain direct grants from outside agencies. Thus, they would not have to obtain permission from the central board of education to submit a proposal or accept a grant from the Ford Foundation.

(c) Have the authority to submit a dispute between the local board and the central board to the Commissioner of Education.

(d) Have the authority to employ new categories of staff members. Thus, if a local school board wants to introduce a computer course they would be able to hire the staff needed to maintain and operate the computer.

(e) Have wide lattitude in making educational policy, so long as the policy conforms to city and state standards.

(3) Central Board of Education Powers –

In addition to the powers previously mentioned, the central board shall also have the responsibility for zoning, site selection, capital budget planning and construction. The central board shall have authority to alter district lines to enhance city-wide policies and to enhance integration and school utilization.

The central board shall reach its decisions after consultation with community boards affected and after consultation with other government agencies. Thus, the City Planning Board and Welfare Department, as well as the Transit Authority should be consulted before changes are made so that the changes would fit into a total city-wide plan even as local conditions are recognized.